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ABSTRACT

The origins of local news in the United States country press between the 1840s and 1870s are discussed and traced in this monograph. Specifically, it deals with why local news reporting in standardized form began when it did, who provided the news, and what the news items revealed about the patterns of life in rural areas and towns in the United States. It notes that although local news columns were a regular feature of the eighteenth century English provincial press, they became a standard part of American newspapers later and only gradually over a long period of time, appearing occasionally in the 1840s, especially in the cities; somewhat more regularly in the 1850s; and typically by the 1860s and 1870s. An analysis is provided of the writing of two volunteer reporters who wrote under the pseudonyms of "Shears" in the 1840s and "Pocumtuck," following the Civil War, about local occurrences in South Deerfield, Massachusetts. The monograph notes that volunteer local reporters tended to write descriptive reports with little analysis of the events. (MKM)

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DAVID J. RUSSO

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Harold A. Fisher, "The EBU Model for Regional Cooperation" (6/2/78).

David J. Russo, "The Origins of Local News in the American Country Press: 1840s-1870s" (3/12/79).

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DAVID J. RUSSO

The Origins of Local News in the U.S. Country Press, 1840s-1870s

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DAVID J. RUSSO is professor of history at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He wishes to thank the staffs of the American Antiquarian Society and the Library of Congress, as well as the Inter-Library Loan Department of the Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, for their assistance and the American Philosophical Society for a grant-in-aid.

WITH THE exception of the Bible and possibly almanacs, the newspaper was undoubtedly the most basic reading matter of Americans until the twentieth century. With books relatively expensive and libraries often private and restricted, cheap newspapers, with their broad and varied contents, stimulated the reading habit and supplemented the meager education of masses of both Britishers and Americans during the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[1]

As far as the editor of the Poughkeepsie (N.Y.) *Political Barometer* was concerned (in 1802): "No family ought to be destitute of a Bible and a newspaper."[2] Similarly, in a lengthy and oft encountered type of editorial statement, the editor of the *Michigan Expositor* asserted (in 1860) that:

> [More] than men often stop to think, is the Newspaper of today an Educator of the people – Penetrating every corner of the land, found in every home, no matter how remote or how lowly, telling its tale of doings, good or ill, transpiring in this busy world of ours, having now a poem and now a gem of literature, expressing decided opinions upon current events with all the freedom and assurance of private conversation and every word read and pondered by meditative old age, shrewd middle age, inexperienced youth, and impressible childhood, it is impossible but that it should wield an influence such as no other agency can. It is read where books are not, and where the words of living speakers are seldom or never heard. Because it tells of what is just now going on, and because in its varied store there is found matter for every taste and degree of culture, it is universally sought and read with avidity. It forms the habit of thinking and believing, it cultivates the taste. . . . All this work the Newspaper may do imperceptibly, but it is nonetheless really done. . . .[3]

In its prospectus (or opening editorial statement), the Barre, Mass., *Worchester West Chronicle* (in 1866) admonished that "our readers will please remember that the editor of a weekly country newspaper has no easy task to accomplish. To make his paper acceptable he must, in a limited space, present a large and varied assortment. He must consult the taste of every class and furnish matter to meet a very varied demand. . . ."[4]

Geoffrey Cranfield's description of the content of eighteenth century English provincial newspapers as "Intelligence, Instruction, and Entertainment" fits well colonial and nineteenth century American journals. All contained commercial and legal notices or advertisements; foreign, domestic, local and commercial news; national, state, county or local government documents (if the journal were an "official" organ and thus paid to print such material); editorial writing that blended fact and opinion; letters from readers and subscribers, and varied "literary" matter, including verse, serialized fiction and assorted essays concerning religion, ethics, politics, agriculture, science, geography, history and biography. The weekly or daily press on both sides of the Atlantic rather quickly became a kind of ongoing encyclopedia for ordinary people, a library-like digest for "everyman."

The long-term persistence of what was a remarkably wide-ranging format attests to the unchanging belief on the part of editors that what their readers wanted was a miscellany of writing relating to the interests of every member of the family. Evidence of this belief takes the form of first-page label heads right under the paper's name plate beginning with the phrase "A Family Newspaper Devoted To. . . . " and of periodic editorial commentary on the virtues of the "family newspaper."[5]

This potpourri of reading material was uneven in quantity, however, especially in the "news" segments. In the "statements of purpose" that appeared in the first issues of new journals, or in the first issues under new editors, or in the very standard New Year's Day editorial reflections, there were often assertions that a local newspaper was of great importance to the life of a community. But, before the 1360s, there was very little sustained effort on the part of most American editors, at least, to report the news of their own villages or of the surrounding countryside. Cranfield offers the following explanation with reference to eighteenth century English newspapers:

> In all their statement of aims, none of the country newspapers made any mention of local news; they were local papers only in the sense that they were printed locally. This was natural enough. In the intimate little rural communities of this time, local news would be spread by word of mouth long before a weekly newspaper could be put into print, while local insularity ensured what was news in one community would be of little or no interest to others.[6]

Similarly, Milton Hamilton found that the same situation existed,

somewhat later, in New York state's journals. As he put it: "Apparently the editor's function included neither the purveying of neighborhood gossip nor the describing of outstanding happenings in the immediate vicinity. . . . He had no faith in the idea that his readers would pay for information which they could secure by word of mouth from their neighbors."[7] Additional evidence comes from an Historical Survey group, sponsored by the U.S. Works Project Administration in the 1930s, that prepared an index of local news items appearing in a Northhampton, Massachusetts, journal from 1786 to 1937. The historical survey team drew the same conclusion:

> Local items, in those days [the late eighteenth century] must have been considered of little consequence [or] were circulated wholly by word of mouth, because for a number of years such items are conspicuous by their absence from the columns of the town's only newspaper. Even events of great interest and importance received little attention.[8]

Statements such as these overstate the case somewhat, however, especially with respect to eighteenth century England, Roy Wiles found that, by mid-century, a significant number of English provincial newspapers "regularly had half a column or more of mixed local and regional news,"[9] which even appeared in a set place—the third column of the third page, though, significantly, such news was set in smaller type than London news.[10] Wiles even found a statement from a new journal that read: "As every one is desirous to know the Occurrences of his own Neighborhood, Care will be taken to publish every remarkable Event, in this and other adjoining Parishes, a number of Gentlemen having engaged to supply the Printer with Intellitgence of this Sort."[11] Cranfield was also compelled by the evidence to refer, if only in passing, to the "local section," but calls it "brief and uninteresting, . . . confined for the most part to births and deaths, horse-races, local celebrations of royal birthdays, and, above all, crimes and accidents."[12]

Whether regarded as important or not, the "Local Intelligence" column of the eighteenth century English provincial press was not a feature carried over to the journals started in Britain's North American colonies during the same years. Such items as did appear were usually interspersed with other editorial matter (that is, material of any description written or edited by the printer-editor himself). The editorial segment of the paper was usually under an inconspicuous line containing in the early years only the name of the

place of publication was located anywhere on an inside page. Such material, quite brief in the earliest journals, gradually expanded in volume, so that, by the 1820s, the town line moved to the top of a page, introducing a column or more of freshly written or edited information and opinion. Other local affairs were described or commented on sporadically in letters from correspondent-subscribers.[13] Hamilton found that "vital statistics"—births, marriages and deaths—continued to be a regular feature of the NewYork state press on into the nineteenth century.[14]

However,only one event was described regularly and at length by the 1820s: the Fourth of July celebrations. It is revealing that these local celebrations marked the *nation's* birthday. The announcement in 1827 by the Auburn (N.Y.) *Cayuga Patriot* that a "portion of our paper will, whenever expedient, be devoted to the local concerns and interests of this village" was, in Hamilton's words, "exceptionally progressive."[15] The fact is that regular local news columns—a regular feature of the eighteenth century English provincial press—became a standard part of American newspapers only gradually over a long period of time, appearing here and there in the 1840s, somewhat more regularly in the 1850s, and typically by the 1860s and 1870s.

This essay deals with several closely related questions. Why did local news reporting in standardized form begin when it did? Who provided such news? What was its substance, i.e. what was regarded as appropriate material for local news items, and what do these items reveal about the ongoing patterns of life in rural areas and towns in the United States?

* * *

AS FOR the question of origins: The so-called "penny press" that developed first in New York and then in other cities during the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s included local news items on a regular basis as a means of appealing to an urban population that undoubtedly could no longer grasp what was happening

in their community through the traditional mode of oral communication.[16] As Bernard Weisberger explains, the readers of the penny press got "a renewed sense of participation in a common life which urban growth had threatened to deny them."[17] Frank Luther Mott summarized the creeds that appeared in editorial statements from time to time as follows: 1) the mass of people ought to have a realistic view of the contemporary scene, without taboo subjects to limit that view; 2) abuses and wrong-doing in *any* institution should be exposed; 3) the primary duty of a newspaper is to give its readers the news and not to support a party, class, interest or creed and 4) local and human interest news is important.[18]

Benjamin H. Day's New York *Sun*, Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune*, and James Gordon Bennett's New York *Herald* all featured a "City Intelligence" or "City Affairs" column, which usually consisted of brief notices concerning the activities of city agencies that were "reported for" the *Sun*, the *Herald* and the *Tribune*, that is were written up by someone and passed on to these editors. But, within a few years, all three papers carried a daily "City Items" column that was made up of general, usually brief, notices of happenings around the city that came to their attention. Why? Day's *Sun* was emphatic in its prospectus that "the object of this paper is to lay before the public at a price within the means of everyone, *all the news of the day*, and at the same time afford an advantageous medium for advertising."[19]

As penny newspapers were established in Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore during the same period, an example was set for the press generally in such urban centers. By the 1860s, local news columns like those in the *Sun*, the *Herald* and the *Tribune* appeared in virtually every city daily, with varied titles like the Boston *Daily Advertiser*'s "About Town," the Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*'s "City Chit Chat," the Philadelphia *Sunday Republic*'s "Local Topics" or "City Siftings," the Baltimore *American and Commercial Advertiser*'s "City Affairs" or the *Chicago Tribune*'s "The City".

Even in smaller cities, when a journal was chosen by the local government to be the "official" paper and was thus paid to include accounts of the official proceedings of various governmental agencies, its editor often added a general local news column in the manner of the "big city" press. The designation of "official paper" gave the favored journal an advantage that some editors exploited. As

the Burlington (Kansas) *Patriot* put it: "The *Patriot* is the official paper of the city of Burlington and the county of Coffey. . . . Parties desiring information of the official acts of the city and county administrations, should subscribe to the *Patriot*, as the full and correct proceedings of the city council and the county board are published only in this paper."[20] Or: "THE OFFICIAL CITY PAPER—Pursuant to a unanimous resolution of the Common Council, the *Daily News*, having a larger circulation than any other paper in Poughkeepsie [N.Y.], is designated as the official paper of the city."[21]

Whether official or not, many daily and weekly journals in the smaller urban centers had regular local news columns by the 1850s, virtually all by the 1870s. The name varied: "City Items" (Portland (Me.) *Transcript*)—"Local Matters" (Newark (N.J.) *Daily Advertiser*, Rochester (N.Y.) *Daily Union and Advertiser*, Portsmouth (N.H.) *Gazette*)—"Local Intelligence" (Springfield (Mass.) *Daily Republican*, Detroit *Free Press*, Milwaukee *Sentinel*—"City Matters" (Worcester (Mass.) *Palladium*)—"City News" (New Haven (Conn.) *Daily Palladium*)—"Town Talk" (Rochester (N.Y.) *Democrat and Chronicle*—"City Intelligence" (Mobile (Ala.) *Daily Register*, Savannah (Ga.) *Republican*, Richmond (Va.) *Enquirer*, Sacramento *Daily Union*)—"Home News" (Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*)—but the format was standard.

Most American newspapers in the nineteenth century were published in towns and villages, that is, in communities whose small size meant that local news could naturally and easily be passed on orally. And yet, the so-called "country press" displayed the same tendency to feature regular accounts of local news as city journals—and at the same time. Why was this so? Why should editors of small-circulation weeklies bother to write about matters that their readers probably already knew about?

One explanation relates to the increasing competition provided by the country editions of city newspapers, particularly along the eastern seacoast. By the 1840s and 1850s there were large numbers of these journals, which were weekly, even semi-weekly, summaries of the daily press of such cities as Boston and New York.[22] In 1842, the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier* reprinted an excerpt from the Salem (Mass.) *Gazette* with the title, "Support Your County Newspaper," which the Greenfield *Gazette* recommended

"especially to those who stop their county paper to take some city paper."

Such persons are generally profuse in their wishes for the welfare of the county paper, but can't afford to take "so many" city papers and their county paper too, therefore they must discontinue some, and the county paper is generally the first one to be discontinued, although they profess that it is a "good" paper and they have no "fault to find with the manner in which it is conducted," and could not "very well dispense with its publication" in the county, but still are not willing to contribute toward its support.

The Salem *Gazette* argued that "the towns and counties, out of the metropolis, do themselves great injustice, whenever they neglect to support one's own town or county newspaper, when its character is unobjectionable, before bestowing patronage on more distant publications."[23] In 1848, another Greenfield journal, the *Franklin Democrat*, reprinted another piece of similar character from the *Maine Farmer*, deploring the growing practice on the part of city newspapers to induce people to go out and find additional subscribers with prizes for those who signed up the most, which was a pernicious practice, the *Farmer's* editor found, because the effect was "to draw off the support of the people from local or country papers and thereby crippling them of their means and usefulness."[24]

But, *why* should rural readers opt for the country press if they had time or money for only one journal? The *Maine Farmer* thought it had a persuasive answer:

[A] paper printed in a city some two, three, or five hundred miles distant cannot be expected to publish all the local news of every section of the country. It would be impossible to do so before it becomes stale, even if their limits would admit, which of course they would not. So it is plain the subscribers are paying for a paper the columns of which are filled with subjects that are only interesting to those who live in the immediate vicinity of the place of pubblication.[25]

Or, as the Salem *Gazette* insisted:

There must always be much in a local newspaper to interest the reader, even when it is not conducted with extraordinary ability. It can never be without the charm of a home production. It relates to concerns of our friends and neighbors, to the improvements, the municipal elections, and the local statistics, the parish changes, the accidents, the business and amusements in which we ourselves, or those around us, have had more or less concern.[26]

In 1857, the Fayetteville (Tenn.) *Observer* summarized an essay that first appeared elsewhere entitled "The Value of County Pa-

pers[illegible] stating that such papers "furnish very convenient mediums for the discussion of questions of local interest. . . ."

> County papers enjoy an advantage over papers published at a distance, because many of their items [and advertisements] are of local interest. . . . [These] papers are of essential service in publishing items of local intelligence in which citizens are more or less interested, but of which many would remain uninformed, were it not for these papers.[27]

In a "Notice to Subscribers," on March 15, 1853, the *Hampshire Gazette* (Northampton, Mass.) argued that there were "many events, occuring in every town, of value and interest to our readers, and which make up an important item in the columns of a country weekly, which never find there way to the public. Any such items of intelligence from responsible sources will be thankfully received." By 1860, the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier* could assert more succinctly and confidently:

> If you are able to take but *one paper*, the paper published in your own county ought to receive your subscription. It tells you of what most interests you—affairs about home—as well as keeps you posted on the general news of the day. It gives you a great amount of information you cannot gather from papers published abroad or in the cities.[28]

The fact is that these statements were far more prescriptions for survival than accurate descriptions of the actual contents of most rural papers during the 1840s and 1850s. The city weeklies so many rural residents were buying contained regular local news columns. It is reasonable to assume that the direct competition from the city weeklies so keenly felt and so frequently commented on acted as a goad to the country editors to regularize their coverage of their own communities, especially if such increased coverage could be justified as "an essential service" in the presentation of news that "many would remained uninformed [of], were it not for these papers (to repeat the words of the Fayetteville *Observer*)." In other words, concerned editors held out the promise that printed local news would indeed range well beyond the random gossip of village meeting places.

Something else that induced editors to include local news in their journals was the recognition—everywhere apparent by the 1840s and 1850s, especially in long-settled districts—that a considerable number of those who were born and grew up in an area later moved away from it.[29] Those who left were suddenly without accustomed

oral or printed means of keeping informed about the life of their hometowns. According to the Salem (Mass.) *Gazette*, "it is to the *absentee* that the local newspaper has the most charms."

> Of the truth of this no one can form an idea, but he who has been away from home. To one at a great distance, or a long time abroad, not only are marriages and deaths sought for with great earnestness, but even the *advertisements* are read with a zest altogether unknown before. They bring into his view the names of friends and acquaintances, recall to his mind localities, streets, and wharves which he has left behind, afford a picture of their commerce, and keep him *posted up*, as the merchants say, as to the business of commercial men. He looks at the various notices of the improvements going on in his absence, with a lively feeling of interest, and even delights in knowing how cold or how slippery it was on a particular day. In fine, there is scarcely a type set up on the four pages of the paper that does not possess a value in his estimation, and especially if he receives it after a long interval, during which there have been no arrivals. . . . Whenever any member of a family is removed to a distance from the parent stock at home, there can be no more acceptable remembrance than the transmission of a regular file of the local newspapers, after their perusal by the family at home. And every family that has a loved member abroad, should carefully preserve a file on the town newspaper, for the perusal of the wanderer on his return.[30]

Though the *Gazette*'s statement contains the hyperbole of all propaganda, it nevertheless seems obvious that at least a portion of a country journal's subscribers were former inhabitants of the area. And, even if such "absentees" did not subscribe, those who remained could, as the *Gazette* indicated, either save back issues for visits or send current issues directly on to the departed ones.

In any case, the standardization of local news reporting in the country press was a long-term process, and the continuation of varied formats, even after such reporting became a regular part of these journals, attests to the independence editors exercised in determining the layout of their journals. Sometimes the example set by one editor was copied by another in the same town or in neighboring ones. For example, when the *Hampshire Gazette* introduced its column on March 15, 1853, the *Gazette and Courier* in nearby Greenfield quickly started one of its own on March 28, as did the *Franklin Democrat* (also printed in Greenfield) a couple of months later. But, such copying was not a universal practice. Neither the length of publication nor the term of service of an editor had much bearing on the timing of the introduction of local news columns. For instance, the Newport (R.I.) *Mercury*, one of several papers that claimed the title of "Oldest Paper in America," did not estab-

lish a regular column until June 23, 1866, right after its 108th anniversary. The Fitchburg (Mass.) *Sentinel* had been published for 32 years before it started such a column and did so only after hiring one Bourne Spooner to do "editorial work" in 1870. The Worcester (Mass.) *Palladium* created a "City Matters" column on June 21, 1871, after 38 years of publication, on the very day its long-time proprietor, Knowlton, died. Similarly the Piscataquis (Me.) *Observer* began its "Local News" feature on December 2, 1875, the day its proprietor, George Valentine Edes, known as the "Oldest Printer in Maine," died. Frequent changes of editors sometimes worked against the continuation of a column, once started. The *Franklin Democrat*'s "Local Intelligence," introduced on May 23, 1853, was discontinued in January, 1854, with the appointment of a new editor. The column was revived under another editor in April, 1860, but had disappeared again by the following year, and the paper itself ended publication in 1862.[31]

Nevertheless, there were also enterprising editors who followed the lead of the urban press during the 1840s and 1850s in efforts sustained over long periods of time. The *Bucks County Intelligencer* (Doylestown, Pa.) boasted of a "Local Matters" (mid-1847) and then a "Local Affairs" (early 1849) column, later claiming in an editorial statement that "[we] believe it to be a fact conceded by all, that the *Intelligencer*, in the completeness and variety of its Local Department stands at the head of the country newspapers of the state. This position has been attained by industry and exertions and we shall spare no labor to maintain and, as opportunities may occur, to excel our present standard."[32] The *Jeffersonian* (Clarksville, Tenn.) started a "Local Items" column on March 23, 1853, right after a new editor and publisher appeared. The Green Bay (Wis.) *Advocate* introduced "Home Matters" in 1853 to its readers upon the resumption of publication after a fire had destroyed the paper's quarters. Such efforts were not confined to any one section of the country. W. W. H. Davis, editor of the Santa Fe (N.M.) *Weekly Gazette* introduced a "Local Items" column in the early 1850s. Other pioneering work appeared in journals from middle America: Urbana (Ill.) *Union* (1855), Clarksville (Tenn.) *Chronicle* (1857), *The Ohio Depository* (Canton) (1857), Hanover (Pa.) *Spectator* (1858).

By the time of the Civil War, it was not at all unusual for a new

journal to begin with a standardized local news column. In 1858, the *Spirit of the West* (Otoe City, Neb.) and the Oconomowoc (Wis.) *Free Press* did so. In 1860, the Fort Atkinson (Wis.) *Standard* and *Jefferson County (Wis.) Republican* did likewise. In 1863: the Port Hudson (La.) *Freeman*. In 1866: the *Worcester West Chronicle* (Barre, Mass.). In 1867: the Princeton (Wis.) *Republic*, the Athens (Tenn.) *Republican*, and the *Weekly Colorado Times*. In 1868: *Mower County Transcript* (Lansing, Mich.) and the Columbus (Wis.) *Republican*.

Indeed, the Civil War had the effect of greatly increasing the reading public's interest in news of all kinds, not only in that of the conflict itself, but also in the ways the war affected the local community.[32] Even "hospital" newspapers like the *Hammond Gazette*[33] and *The Skirmisher*[34] had "Local Items," as the *Gazette* put it, "[for] the benefit of the Sick and Wounded. . . ."[35] And though, the Connersville (Ind.) *Weekly Times* confessed, "during the war, many of our patrons, in their eagerness to obtain the latest news, subscribed for a daily and discontinued their county paper, [many] of these are now coming back, and our subscription list is increasing to an extent that is indeed flattering."[36]

In the years after the war, the local news column became a standard part of the American press, and even when the editor of a particular journal—for example, the Quincy (Mass.) *Patriot*—neglected to establish a formal column with a banner line, virtually no newspaper ignored local news. The evidence for this development is unmistakable and is contained in the so-called "Rowell Collection" of American newspapers for the centennial year 1876.[37] Joseph R. Hawley, president of the Philadelphia Centennial Commission and an owner of the Hartford (Conn.) *Courant* persuaded the firm that published *Rowell's Newspaper Directory* to manage a display of all 8129 American newspapers at the centennial exhibition. According to the firm's owner, all agreed to provide a six months subscription. A pigeonhole was provided for each publication within the building designed especially for the occasion. A sign reading "Come in and see a paper from home" was an effective lure for passersby and the Rowell exhibit was well-attended.[38] As with the Civil War, so with Centennial Year: a dramatic national event had the effect of heightening awareness of one's local community. Appropriately, the editor of a new journal emphasized in his opening statement on

March 11, 1876, that the centennial was a time for reflection on the history and character of his town.[39]

The growing emphasis on local news in the country press during the middle of the nineteenth century was also mirrored in the attention given to the subject in the "prospectus" (opening statement in the first issue) or the New Year's editorial of these years. On July 5, 1837, the Danbury (Conn.) *Times* in "To Our Patrons," asserted that "[none] will doubt that the newspaper . . . furnishes opportunities for conveying local information to the public, and facilities for the transaction of business, which every town of the enterprise and importance of Danbury ought to possess"—a statement made long before newspapers *in fact* conveyed much local information. By contrast, the prospectus for Williamsburg's *Virginia Gazette* on August 24, 1853, made no reference whatever to the desirability of printing distinctly local news. Similarly, at about the same time, the Lake Providence (La.) *Herald* made no statement at all on local news, though it did indicate in passing that "[we] have made arrangements for regular, able, and reliable correspondence."[40] The *Tri-Weekly Commercial* (Henderson, Ky.) was somewhat more explicit in its first issue on August 4, 1856: "Our greatest object shall be the development of National, State, and Local matters . . . [a paper] from which may be gleaned all news of a local and foreign character." The St. Cloud (Minn.) *Visitor*, in its prospectus on May 20, 1858, went so far as to "expect the assistance of several hundred local reporters, farmers and their wives, Red River traders, lumbermen, land agents, surveyors, hunters, etc. . . . ." By March 9, 1864, the new *Arizona Miner* (Fort Whipple) told its readers: "We shall spare no effort to make it an acceptable record of everything of moment that transpires in the territory. . . . Local rather than national affairs will, for the present, occupy our chief attention."

After the war, the trend continued. The *Worcester West Chronicle* (Barre, Mass.), in its "To The Public" statement on January 24, 1866, said that "local news we shall endeavor to furnish as fully as possible. We have made, already, partial arrangements for this end, and hope soon to perfect them, that we shall be able to furnish all the local news of interest in each town in which our paper circulates." And yet, not all new journals—even in the 1860s—made a commitment to provide local news. For instance, the Athens (Tenn.) *Republican* began its life on July 12, 1867, with no refer-

ence whatever to the subject. By the 1870s, though, the local orientation of newspapers in communities heretofore without such a service was clearly evident in statements like the one provided by the proprietors of the new West Roxbury (Mass.) *Gazette*:

> It having long been felt a necessity by the citizens of West Roxbury, that the town should be represented by a local journal, the undersigned will shortly commence the publication of a weekly. . . . The establishment of a local paper supplies the means for the free and impartial discussion of all questions of local and popular interest, and brings before the reader, from week to week, items and facts which could be obtained from no other source.[41]

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence that the country press was gaining a local perspective in the years between the Civil War and the Centennial celebrations was the creation in at least one town of a weekly journal exclusively devoted to local affairs. In Bridgewater, Mass., *Every Saturday* started publication on March 11, 1876, with the introductory statement:

> In answer to repeated requests, we attempt with the present number of "Every Saturday" to supply a much needed medium of local news. . . . [We do not] intend to discuss questions outside of town matters, except so far as they are of local interest. . . . We propose to give everyone a chance to "speak" his own mind by writing to the editor of this paper about whatever he sees, hears, or knows as to local affairs, and to enable the business men of the town to advertise their goods. . . .[42]

Adding that "the good people of Bridgewater should understand this is *Centennial Year*," the editor pointed to the fact that it had been 100 years since the last local paper had appeared and disclosed his intention of having a file of the new paper at Rowell's display at the Philadelphia exhibition.

But, the most revealing evidence that the country press had come full circle, from being a local journal that contained news and information from afar to being a truly community-oriented publication, is of a more off-handed, casual kind. The Colorado Springs *Gazette*, on September 16, 1876, included the following notice under its local news column line: "On account of the press of local matter, we cannot properly omit, we drop for the week, the Republican National and State ticket, anxious as we are at all times and in all ways, to 'keep it before the people.' "

The local news columns of the country press had an impressive array of banner lines, matching in range those of the city dailies. Unusual titles like "Local Record of Passing Events—What We See

and What We Hear"[43] and "Hither and Yonder"[44] sometimes appeared, but far more typical were such headings as "Local and Miscellaneous," "Local and Otherwise," "Local and Personal," "Local Items," "Local Matters," "Local Intelligence," "Local Department," "Local Affairs," "Home Matters" and "Home News."

In this same period, towns and cities that were county seats also developed regular columns for county news. An inducement was provided by the decision made by the Postmaster General's office, issued on a temporary basis during the 1840s and then codified into law in the Post Office Act of 1851, to allow the delivery of newspapers free of charge over a certain distance, at first defined as 30 miles, later specified as the county within which a paper was published.[45] The free use of the mail service encouraged publishers in county seats to seek out new subscribers in the vicinity. One way to do this was to recognize the existence of readers in various near-by settlements in the same manner that those in the "home" community had gained recognition—through the regular reporting of local news. Thus, "County Matters," "County Items," "Town and County," "Neighboring News" columns supplemented those on the town or city where a paper was published and typically contained secondary headings for each of the settlements around the county, something that *The Constitutionalist* of Plainfield, N.J., treated humorously: "Scotch Plains Scratchings," "Westfield Wisps," "North Plainfield Paragraphs."[46] Of a similar nature were the "Suburban News" columns that urban dailies such as the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, the Newark *Daily Advertiser* and the Cincinnati *Daily Gazette* featured by the 1870s.

It was quite standard for papers printed in state capitals (especially those paid to be "state printers") to have a formal "State News" column, though so did many urban dailies. And weeklies, like the *Vermont Chronicle* and the *Vermont Journal*, assembled and printed in Windsor, but datelined from a number of other places, set considerable space aside for such items, covering various "hometowns" throughout the state. Such columns were usually subdivided by counties and towns. Other papers—especially those in states in the heartland of the country—presented summaries of regional news: "The East," "The South," "The West." Still other journals included items listed under the rubrics "Domestic" (or, less typically, "National") and "Foreign." And though it was unusual

(especially in the 1850s) for a country paper to have as its front-page second "binder" run: "The Home—The County—The State—The Union—The World,"[47] the well organized formats of such small urban dailies as the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican* or the Milwaukee *Sentinel* and such big city dailies as the Chicago *Tribune* (by the 1870s) were indicative of how aware some editors had become of the geographic dimensions of news coverage.

Indeed, such journals couldn't resist making occasional comments on their outstanding news service. The *Sentinel*, its editor claimed in a New Year's statement, "will publish daily dispatches from all quarters of the globe, so that each issue will be a history of the world for the previous day."

> It will pay special attention to Wisconsin news, and has engaged a correspondent at each county seat and at the other principal cities and villages of the state, to forward prompt advices of all occurrences of interest. In this respect, it has placed itself beyond competition. Its machinery for the collection of news is far more thorough and liberal than anything that has been previously attempted in this state, and is excelled by only one or two papers in the West.[48]

* * *

CITY EDITORS increasingly relied on regular, paid reporters during the 1840s and thereafter. As Mott explains: "Reporters did not become necessary to newspaper staffs until the penny press had placed an emphasis on local news. Not until the forties did even the largest papers generally have reporters for 'local items'." By the 1860s, Mott found that "[the] expansion of local news led . . . to the promotion of the city editor to one of the most important positions in the paper."

> The first city editors, in the early fifties, were merely "chief reporters," but by the seventies they had come to be second only to their managing editors in importance. . . . Small staffs before and during the war brought about much cooperation in covering local news, and in the sixties "agencies" and "bureaus" were set up outside newspaper staffs to sell local news to the papers. Newsgathering by contract continued [until the 1890s].[49]

By contrast, country editors depended on volunteers from among their own subscribers to supply them with items, a distinction

doubtless determined by the growing financial resources of the urban daily in contrast to the always precarious situation of the rural weeklies, whose editors often had to beg for and go out after subscription payments.[50] As local news became increasingly important, a considerable number of editors hired "Local Editors," whose name and title usually appeared right under the local news headline. By 1876, for example, papers in such places as Attleboro, Mass.; Clinton, N.J.; Lebanon, Pa.; Luray and Wytheville, Va.; Asheville and Wilson, N.C., and Cedar Rapids, Ia., all had such editorial assistants.[51]

Whether organized by the general or by a special "local" editor, local and county-wide news items either were summaries of what the editor heard or had received in writing from a volunteer or were verbatim accounts of what the volunteers had submitted. Verbatim accounts were usually signed by the correspondent's pen-name. If such writers were quite regular in their submissions, they were sometimes favored with a "column" of their own, which was almost always the case if the correspondence came either from the state or the national capital or even from large cities, such as New York.

Some editors—at least those of the dailies in the larger, fast-growing towns—were able to pay for material provided by others. The Mobile (Ala.) *Daily Register*, in a "Message to Correspondents" used the enticement that "[volunteer] correspondence is invited from any part of the world and, if used, will be liberally paid for."[52] A far more typical arrangement for the country weekly was indicated in the *Crawford Journal* of Meadville, Pa.: "A copy of the paper will be mailed regularly to any one who will act as a correspondent."[53] Some editors frankly stated that they would use the material submitted as the basis for news items they themselves would write. As the *Review* of Atlantic City, N.J., put it: "Send us items and we will prepare them for publication."[54] Similarly, the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier* added to its plea for news: "Give us the particulars and we will dress them up for our columns."[55]

Though pen-names were allowed as signatures for verbatim accounts of the material volunteer correspondents submitted, editors insisted that the real name of the writer accompany these "communications." Such reminders were legion. As early as September 3,

1828, *The Hunterdon Gazette* (Flemington, N.J.) told its correspondents: "We can promise no attention, in future, to any communication intended for insertion in the *Gazette*, unless the real name of the writer is, in every instance, left with the editor." In 1842, the Greenfield *Gazette and Courier* said to its correspondents: "We have received through the mail several communications, the authors of which have not disclosed their names. The authors should know, if they have read our paper, that such communications cannot be published."[56] By the 1870s this editorial admonition was commonplace.[57] The reason editors insisted on having a correspondent's real name was, in the words of the Asbury Park (N.J.) *Journal*, "as a guarantee of good faith."[58] The *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg) stressed the importance of original material, not something extracted from another journal and unattributed to it. Proper identification meant the contributor was willing to go on record as having written what he submitted.[59] Besides, *The Review* (Atlantic City) argued, "[we] are not supposed in all cases to endorse the opinions of our correspondents," whose secret identities should at least be known to the editors who were willing to print something at odds with their own views.[60]

Many country weeklies sporadically included pleas to their subscribers to send in local news items, often in the form of a "TO CORRESPONDENTS" notice under the local news column banner. Occasionally, these and other, less formal notices became quite detailed or even personal. The *Gazette and Courier* argued that "[if] some friends in each town would spend half an hour occasionally in writing us a letter, stating what has occurred in his neighborhood, we would then be able each week to spread the same before our readers."[61] The editor of the *New Jersey Signal* was so enamored of the contributions of one of his volunteers that he added the comment to one dispatch: "Your interesting letters are always welcome, and we should be glad to shake their talented author by the hand and gaze upon him face to face."[62] The *Norfolk Democrat* (Dedham, Mass.) candidly admitted its dependence upon "several correspondents who lend a helping hand. One, who signs K.K.—which we think means Kapital Korrespondent—gives us some valuable articles. . . . We cannot go round to pick up local items as we should like, but are in hopes to, sometime."[63] The *Stars and Stripes* (Thi-

badaux, La.) went so far as to solicit the services of "[a] few smart enterprising young men [who] are wanted immediately at this office to canvass Attakapas country."[64]

Though the editors of many country weeklies regularly encouraged subscribers and readers to submit local items, others received so much material that they felt compelled to issue what amounted to guidelines for correspondents. The Mobile (Ala.) *Daily Register*—perhaps typical of journals in fast-growing communities—told its readers that their correspondence would be "published, or commented upon, if deemed of sufficient interest to the general public.

> Such letters should be brief and to the point, and should be written on one side of the paper only. . . . Voluntary contributions of poetry, stories, and general literary matter are not desired; and such will not be returned, if not used. Our corps of contributors is already as large as we can utilize; and the daily receipt of large quantities of manuscripts renders this notice necessary."[65]

That similar statements appeared by the 1870s in such country weeklies as the Burlington (Vt.) *Clipper* (May 18, 1876), the Asbury Park (N.J.) *Journal* (Feb. 26, 1876), the Keyport (N.J.) *Weekly* (Aug. 18, 1876), the Wilmington (N.C.) *Post* (May 5, 1876) and the Anderson (S.C.) *Journal* (July 7, 1876) signified that the editors of journals in smaller communities sometimes were constrained to act in the same manner.

The range of objects covered by local news items was frequently left up to the discretion of the voluntary correspondents. The *Commercial Advertiser* (Buffalo, N.Y.) simply stated that "[we] are glad to hear from our readers upon all current topics. . . ."[66] The *Union Free Press* (Kittaning, Pa.) said that "LOCAL NEWS and matters of general interest to the public thankfully received."[67] The *New Jersey Mirror* (Mt. Holly) thought "anything of interest in your neighborhood is worth reporting."[68] The Dover (N.J.) *Index* wanted all "live local topics, short and spicy,"[69] And, the Santa Fe (N.M.) *Gazette* let its readers know that it "would be glad to receive every species of information about the territory."[70]

But, other editors spelled out the sort of information they sought. The Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier* spoke of "items of local intelligence, marriages, deaths, etc.," on August 1, 1853, and became even more specific by January 9, 1860: "All those who are in possession of facts of local interest—such as casualties, incidents, doings of public meetings, projects for public improvements, new

enterprises, etc. will confer a special favor by sending same to this office." The Hot Springs (Ark.) *Courier* wanted "news of passing incidents, local happenings, the crops, etc."[71] The *Utah Weekly Miner* (Salt Lake City) invited "correspondence from every part of the territory on new discoveries of every kind, on the inauguration of new enterprises, such as railroads, irrigating canals, or other public works, on manufactories, and, in fact, anything that has a bearing on the growth and material prosperity of our territory."[72]

In fact, editors refused to print only material personally abusive of an individual. The Elizabeth (N.J.) *Daily Journal* spoke of "unkind personal allusions."[73] The *New Jersey Republican* (Hackensak and Englewood) insisted that its "communications must be free from anything of [a] scurrilous or slanderous nature,"[74] or, as the Clinton (Mass.) *Reflex* put it: "We cannot be induced to make our sheet the vehicle of personal abuse. . . ."[75] The *Oregon Argus* (Oregon City) "received several communications which are admirably well-written, and no doubt contain a great deal of truth, but which we shall be compelled to decline publishing on account of their personal character,"[76] Similarly, the *Oregon Spectator* (Oregon City) indicated it had "received two or three rather ill-natured articles which we decline publishing."[77]

The broad-ranging character of the local news editors of country weeklies sought was in sharp contrast to their "party-line" reports of national and state politics. Most journals founded before the late nineteenth century had a party affiliation and presented the views of one of the major parties.[78] Indeed, news at the level of a state or of the nation was conceived to be "political" news; both the states and the nation were viewed as wholly political entities. Only particular local communities within them had definitions that went beyond the purely political one. Because of their party affiliation, most journals presented plainly partisan accounts of the political life of both nation and state, accounts often copied from "official" party organs in the national and state capitals. At the same time, editors sought news of a general character concerning particular local communities, whether of the "hometown" or of villages or towns around the county, or even in the state, region or other parts of the country (in the form of items culled from the "exchanges"—copies of other papers editors received free of charge through the mail).

Not all newspapers maintained party affiliations, however. Ex-

ceptions include the Danbury (Conn.) *Times* (July 5, 1837), the Portland (Me.) *Transcript* (April 29, 1848), the *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg) (Aug. 25, 1853), *The Tri-Weekly Commercial* (Henderson, Ky.) (Aug. 4, 1856), the St. Cloud (Minn.) *Visitor* (May 20, 1858), the *Arizona Miner* (Fort Whipple) (Mar. 9, 1864), and the *Worcester West Chronicle* (Barre, Mass.) (Jan. 24, 1866). The editor of the new Portland (Me.) *Transcript* still had doubts in 1848 that an independent paper could succeed: "We may err in supposing that the time has arrived when the public mind in our state and our city demand something more from the men of the day than mere devotion to party claims. It may be too early to attempt to sustain a paper in Maine devoted to no party or sectarian purpose, but independent of all."[79] But, by 1853, the *Virginia Gazette* was more assertive:

> We do not deem it right and proper, in a limited population like that of Williamsburg, where each of the great political parties [is] nearly equally divided, to establish a partisan paper. . . . We cannot conceive of a more servile and degrading position than to be the feed and pampered food of any man, or set of men, and to engage in the dirty work of a political puffer.[80]

And, by 1864, the independent *Arizona Miner* said simply that "[Local] rather than National affairs will, for the present, occupy our chief attention."[81]

But, typically, the country weekly *was* politically partisan. And the editors of such journals apparently had no difficulty in living with seemingly contradictory definitions of state-national news and local news. Their readers were expected to accept a partisan view of political life in the state and the nation—provided by the editors themselves or by regular correspondents, at the same time that they were presented with all manner of local news items—usually originating with the subscribers themselves. No one—readers or editors—commented on or tried to explain this discrepancy (so obvious to the observer of our time), a discrepancy that contained contrasting perceptions of what a town or village was and what a state or a nation was. By the 1870s, the early antiquarian-town historians shared the country editor's definition of local news to the extent that the chronicle-histories produced in these years also featured an encyclopedic range of subjects. Similarly, the early, amateur national and state historians presented historical accounts that were

wholly political in form and substance, much like the state and national news coverage of the press.[82] News reporting and historical writing thus developed in a strikingly similar manner during the nineteenth century.

But, upon closer examination, some of the contrast between state-national news and local news disappears. The most partisan of editors, if their journals were fortunate enough to be chosen by a party (if dominant) as the "official" paper of the city, county, state or nation, was not in a position to deny his subscribers the debates of the legislature or council and thus the position of the opposition. Furthermore, many journals printed verbatim the Annual Messages of the U.S. president and the state's governor, messages that contained general statements on matters legislators ought to be concerned about from the perspective of executives who might or might not have the same party affiliation as the journal publishing the address. In addition, correspondents from the state and national capitals sometimes discussed political life in a generally non-partisan manner. And, though editors solicited news on a broad range of subjects from their subscribers, what appeared in the editor's column or in the formal local news column was a mixture of fact and opinion. There was common agreement "news" should be current, but that was as far as the consensus extended.[83] When a country editor "wrote up" the local news items himself, he commonly interlaced factual information with observations and opinions every bit as partisan as the state and national political accounts that also appeared under the editorial banner. And, when verbatim submissions of the volunteer reporters were included, they sometimes contained the same mixture of fact and opinion. By contrast, because the party system had not become an established feature of the political life of towns and villages, accounts of town meetings and the activities of town officials were generally non-partisan in character, though many editors took sides in the occasional public controversies that disturbed the tranquility of their community. At bottom, what really separated local news from state and national was its immense range, not its objectivity.

Indeed, there was much confusion in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, when local news reporting gradually assumed a standardized format, as to what items should be allowed. As early

as 1838, the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Mercury* questioned whether long obituaries, written by relatives, should be printed free of charge:

> The custom of publishing extended obituary notices is so prevalent as to make considerable in-roads upon our columns, and renders it inconvenient to us at times, when pressed for room and undesirable to our readers. Though interesting to relatives, they usually possess few attractions to the general reader, and the calls upon us for their insertion are now so frequent that to give them all would require more space than we can consistently spare. For the purpose of lessening their number, we have come to the conclusion to charge for them, hereafter, at half the rate of advertising. . . . The usual notices of death and marriage will be given gratis as heretofore.[84]

The paper's successor, the Greenfield *Gazette and Courier*, returned to the problem a few years later: "We have received several long obituary notices, which we have taken the liberty to cut down considerably. It is impossible for us to insert notices of so great length. We are always happy to insert marriages and deaths free of charge, and would thank our friends in different parts of the country to forward to us all that may occur in their vicinity."[85] By the 1870s the *Star and Sentinel* (Gettysburg, Pa.) could say, simply: "Obituary notices exceeding five lines, charged at the rate of five cents per line, payable in advance."[86]

Some editors of country journals allowed one-line advertisements to be mixed in with brief news items under their local news headings. For example, this was the case with the *Mercer Eagle* (Sharon, Pa.) (May 3, 1876), *The Republican* (Angola, Ind.) (Sept. 7, 1865) and the Mobile (Ala.) *Daily Register* (throughout the 1860s and 1870s). But other editors objected, perhaps not as strongly as *The Sun* (Concord, N.C.), which stated bluntly that "personal matter or puffing business houses, by correspondents, will be consigned to the proper place—the fire."[87] The *Independent Gazette* (Lancaster, N.H.) thought that "[simply] being a subscriber does not entitle one to the privilege of advertising his or her business through the medium of the local columns."[88] The Cumberland (Md.) *Civilian and Telegraph* put its readers on "NOTICE—Hereafter we shall make it a rule to charge at the rate of 15¢ per line for all "puff" or advertisements of *any* description, which are placed in our local columns, religious and charitable notices alone excepted."[89] *The Star and Sentinel* (Gettysburg, Pa.) noted that "[all] business locals, an-

nouncements of concerts, fairs, or similar enterprises, got up to make money, whether for associations or individuals, must be paid for at regular rates."[90] The Gosport (Ind.) *Gazette* was more lenient: "Notices for church fairs, festivals, and for Masonic, Odd Fellows, or other charitable associations, half-rates."[91] The *Norfolk Patriot* (Dedham, Mass.) was more general: "Notices of every kind, excepting those of a political character to be paid for at the same rate as advertisements."[92]

The fully developed, formal local news column of the 1860s and 1870s sometimes was prefaced each week with certain kinds of basic information about town or village life. Typical was the Atlantic (Iowa) *Telegraph's* column, which began with standard information on train times, mail-times, a church directory, a directory of clubs and a listing of city and county officers. What followed such prefatory material was a series of items relating to the place where the paper was published or to settlements around the county, if the journal happened to be printed in the county seat. These items were probably little more than written versions of what was talked about in the community. Such gossip must have dwelled upon the unusual occurrence, those happenings that stood out as different or dramatic and that gave some excitement to the humdrum pattern of rural life. Certainly the unusual and the bizarre accurately describe a wide range of the printed local news items: freak births, oddly shaped crops and animals, rare accidents, strange illnesses and deaths, extreme weather patterns, natural disasters. But, there were also many items covering varied activities of a repetitive or seasonal character. Local news columns abounded with references to church services and religious meetings; the activities of reform movements (usually temperance), farmer's clubs, cultural organizations and schools; the recreational and sporting practices of the time; the social events and visiting patterns of the village; seasonal agricultural, industrial and commercial transactions; town meetings; the community's physical growth; crime patterns; health and welfare problems; the doings of prominent families or the poor—in short, the kind of thing editors asked for.

Though the range and mix of items persisted throughout the middle decades of the century, there was an increasing number of items dealing with the activities of clubs and with the social gatherings of villagers and town-dwellers as rural communities grew

size.[93] We learn about such leisure pastimes as sleigh rides, maple sugar parties, ice cream sociables, dramas, fancy dress balls, and dinner meetings. We read again and again about such organizations as reading associations, literary clubs, dramas clubs, summer schools, local historical societies, cemetery associations, sabbath school associations, YMCAs, sewing circles, ladies' clubs, benevolent societies, the W.C.T.U. and other temperance organizations, sidewalk associations, village improvement associations, farmers' clubs and Granges.[94]

An index of the kind prepared by the Historical Records Survey of the Work Projects Administration in the 1930s for the *Hampshire Gazette* reveals the kinds of items that appeared in the local news columns of the country press through the 1870s. Even when such items are organized under broad categories, their extensive range and variety as a chronicle of community life remains evident. For example, the breakdown of items on Deerfield that appeared in the Greenfield *Gazette and Courier* for the "banner" year 1876 is not at all atypical of what filled the columns of the country press generally, though the volume and frequency varied from year to year, from paper to paper: accidents, 14; agriculture, 8; anecdotes, 3; business, 13 (including ads within column); crime 3; cultural, 15 (lectures, concerts, etc.); historical notes, 6; improvements, 10 (roads, sidewalks, gardens); individuals, 50 (activities, health, visits, trips); oddities, 6 (unusual plants, animals, etc.); organizations, 22 (clubs, etc.); politics, 29; religion, 9; schools, 19; social activity, 35 (parties, gatherings, etc.); statistics, 2 (compilations of births, deaths); town growth, 2 (new buildings); weather 2.

Editors and volunteer reporters were by turns factual and opinionated, but in either case their news items generally concerned only the most readily observable or easily understood happenings. For instance, religious, social and cultural activities were typically listed in notices before the event and were afterwards summarized briefly and almost always uncritically, sometimes by some official of the organization involved. Agricultural, commercial or industrial news usually consisted of references to the establishment of new firms or to quantities of goods grown, produced or shipped from the area. Political news generally focussed on the annual town meeting (in areas where they were held), with detailed listings of the items pass-

ed, or (more widely) on actions taken by town officials. Descriptions of the physical layout of a community and references to its physical and economic growth were sometimes the subject of "New Year Reviews"[95] or of special series, such as "Walks About Town"[96] or "Our Village"[97] or lead pieces in the local news column.[98]

It was typical of the native-born editors and volunteer reporters of these years to view immigrants as outsiders, even when such recent arrivals clearly lived within the community defined in a physical way. No one commented on or tried to explain these contrasting definitions of community—one social, the other geographic. Native-born residents of a village or a town were generally not disturbed by the presence of such "foreigners" as long as they congregated in a specific section of the community. But, when the occasional rude and violent behavior of the immigrants threatened to become the norm for the village as a whole, correspondents expressed their alarm. Here is an example involving Deerfield, Mass.:

> "Tough End," formerly located at Cheapside, is removed to this village. Rumors of this change have been floating in the air for a year or two past, and the sorry event took place during the fall and early winter of last year. . . . Operations have not been confined to one particular locality, but have favored all, without partiality, with sufficient variety of performance to prevent any monotony in the swiftly occurring events. Robbery of a farm barn in one locality was quickly followed by boisterous and profane conduct in a different place, breaking in of dens, injuring of front fences, etc., while the jolly and fun loving, jeering, and hooting at passers-by was soon changed to desecration of the cemetaries, breaking of tombstones, injury of fountains, etc., and so on in frequent and varied performance.[99]

In this instance, however, an "Irishman" responded, though his remarks were merely summarized by the editor:

> W.C. Moran writes us a long communication in his own defense, indignantly repelling the charges that have been made against Irish boys of Deerfield. He claims that they are not without the assistance of the Yankee boys, in their frolics, and conduct themselves as well as the latter. "If anyone is to air us in the papers," says he, "will he state facts, not suppositions."[100]

But, for the most part, immigrants were ignored. Local news items usually concerned the "real" community, the native-born "Americans."

* * *

THE prominence given to physical descriptions of communities and to their growth suggests that editors and their subscribers shared a kind of "booster" mentality to emphasize the positive features of their community in an effort to generate civic pride and a good image abroad.[101] The great emphasis these writers placed on organizational and social activity reveals a strong predilection for that which was uncontroversial or conducive to peace and harmony. And though they sometimes became moralistic—deploring bad conduct and criminal activity of whatever kind, or partisan—taking a clear position on issues that divided their communities, pioneer local reporters were not at all critical of the basic economic and social arrangements of America's village society.

The identity of these volunteers is extremely difficult to ascertain, not only because of the pseudonyms under which they wrote, but also because of the brief period during which most contributed. As a group, they were—and remain—quite anonymous. Fortunately, there are a few exceptions. One is "Shears," who wrote under the heading of "Doings in South Deerfield and Elsewhere," which appeared in the *Franklin Democrat* of Greenfield, Mass., during the years 1846, 1847 and 1848, providing a quite regular series of long reports on life in that village and its environs.

South Deerfield was a relatively small village at the time of the Mexican War, when "Shears" made his contribution. Though still primarily agricultural, the village already showed signs of the industrial activity that became a commonplace feature of life in towns throughout America by the mid-nineteenth century.[102] A lawyer and store owner who somehow found leisure time to cut clippings from newspapers and magazines and to write rather long essays for his column, "Shears" became for a brief time a true chronicler of the life of his village.

He had a wide definition for what he would comment on and how he would write about it: "Nobody procures or prevents our writing just the same impressions learned, from what is seen and heard; and nobody shall hinder us from jotting down just the notions acquired by the exhibition of the faults and follies of the good and great, the wicked and little, in just such language as happens to come first. . . ."[103] Yet, there were limits: "In all our clippings we don't

intend to cut any man's feelings, or split open his privileges—nor is there any intention to be personal."[104]

There were times when "Shears" was too occupied to meet the weekly deadline, and when he wrote again he reacted in various ways to his failure to stay on schedule. He could be mildly sarcastic:

> Again, Mr. Editor, we come trembling to pay our respects, and re-commence our weekly duty. Doubtless an "anxious public" hath opened your paper from week to week, and given a hurried glance over its columns and wondered "what in the name of cabbage has become of "Shears" . . . . Though not yet "hale and hearty", there is a disposition to do good in the world, that impels us to this present undertaking. . . .

Or: "[We've]" pressed the uneasy couch of pain "too many days this week to do much. But the world must be kept up with, and if we should fail to make our regular appearance the concern and consequences might be universal."[105] But, he could also show frustration and disillusionment:

> Your readers must not be too much tickled if our future comings are very short. The fact is, we have other engagements on our hands that claim and deserve both time and duty, and some of the labors connected therewith are a deal pleasanter than making fun for people out in Zoar, whom we have never seen and who don't care a fig whether our life be short or long, miserable or happy.

And:

> It is a long time that has no turning and a long silence of ours that knows no breaking. But neither the straight lane nor the long silence has much effect on the material world of "business." Groceries go up, and mostly down! flour rises—with yeast in it—and falls; cars come and go, and the world moves on regardless alike of rising and decline, life or death, or even whether we write a line or not, to chronicle its various movements.[106]

He also expressed his displeasure over the fact that subscribers in other towns weren't doing what he was at least trying to do:

> For some few weeks there has been a column of the Democrat headed "Doings at South Deerfield and Elsewhere." Now some pleasant people have wondered a little, why there was not a report of the doings in "Elsewhere" a little oftener. It must not be expected that all the amusing catastrophes of the world are to happen directly under our nose. There are some awful scrapes and monstrous births besides those it is our duty to chronicle, and they ought to be recorded in either living prose or dying verse. . . . There's no use in denying that a good deal of fun comes off every week, in all quarters of this mighty county, and if folks ought to be talked to and very much blamed if they won't let their neighbors enjoy it too. The lazy miscreants that have a good case and don't report it, may depend upon it that we shan't make

sport for them much longer, if they won't turn too and help; and they may consider this sober warning as a notice to quit, unless they "take pen in hand" soon. . . . [107]

That "Shears" took his duty somewhat seriously is also evident, for he often expressed his sincere, though flippantly expressed, regrets at missing the weekly deadline: "We own right up, Mr. Editor, that our delinquencies of late have been not only somewhat alarming, but absolutely detrimental to the best interests of the community. If we have not done those things we ought not to do, we may have left undone those things we ought to do, and so come to make a tangible apology by bringing down history to the present hour, being the first leisure one for some six weeks. . . . "[108] By 1849, as his entries appeared less and less frequently, he added:

It's been so long since we've had our hand fairly in, that you needn't be surprised if things don't rattle off as they used to. Indeed, it would be nothing strange if even the grammar should be a little out of joint, and the general run of things very irregular and unsettled.[109]

"Shears" did not hesitate to depict a visible, easily recognizable controversy as just that: "The Second Congregational Society of Deerfield has lately hushed up all its differences, and peacably and unitedly settled a worthy and faithful pastor. No discord or dissension is anticipated within its precincts. . . . "[110] On one occasion, he lectured his readers about "the corroding, demoralizing cares of gain:"

"From early morn to late in the dewy eve," we toil and pull and sweat, seemingly for the one great purpose in life, the gathering of gold, but also really, for the ruin of health and growth of mind. We have in our village some eighty boys between the ages of seven and twenty, and if men who are their natural or legal guardians, will keep themselves and their boys busy about their farms and shops all day and then go to the stores and groceries in the evening, it must be expected the boys will follow. It is not our purpose to complain of the rush of "business," but we cannot for the life of trade, see why cotton and conscience, codfish and soul, black tea and a thirst for knowledge, coffee and kindness, tallow candles and parental duties, linseed oil and love, ginger and benevolence, saleratus and the social affections, should all be tumbled together into the great crucible of life, and there simmered and heated and boiled, till the product is nothing but dross, or the fire that heats grows fiercer and hotter, till all is consumed. . . . We can recognize it as not part of man's duty to "give such ear to the clink of mannon's box" as to induce him to neglect everything that tends to inform, elevate, and purify, no part of his duty to neglect the education of his children, and the social gathering of his family and friends, and no part of his duty to assist his neighbor in neglecting his public and

private duties of life, by keeping open doors for the sake of his bargains and his money. . . .[111]

"Shears" also scorned those caught up in a frenzy of speculation when the railroad line was being built through the town: "But, where will be the de-*pot*?" ask all the wise and interested—"aye, where *will* it be?," say sober savants, as each one calculates his gain or loss in real estate, just in proportion to its nearness to or remoteness from his own kitchen or cooking stove. . . ."[112] He also felt that many of his fellow townsmen lacked a charitable instinct, in that, though a bushel of corn per family "could easily be spared" for famine-striken Ireland, many would not give to the poor, because there was no profit in it.[113] Nor did public officials escape criticism. Even his own work-place came under attack for governmental reglect:

> The commissioners ought to take hold and furnish us with a bigger court room. At present the court is held in the "Village Hall," which is quite too small for the usually collected audience, and is occupied each alternate Sunday by a "meeting," and at other times by singing schools and conferences, to the derangement of papers, and great detriment to the law library. At any rate, we need a jail here.[114]

"Shears" also commented critically on sermons when he felt clergymen made erroneous statements about secular developments or even other religions.[115]

But, though critical of certain human characteristics in those whom he observed, "Shears" was hardly one who wanted basic changes in the structural arrangements of Amercia's village society. In fact, he was for the most part a small town booster, whose very debut as a local correspondent came out of sense of civic pride. The Greenfield newspapers had been dwelling "on the open and visible improvement of their street, stores, and dwellings." In a letter that appeared on December 2, 1845, "Shears" surveyed the recent physical growth of his "quiet village," a subject he returned to sporadically thereafter.[116] In a "New Year's Review" for 1847, he wrote:

> During the past year, six dwelling houses have been built in the village proper, and are now occupied, and five large barns stand in the same category. Three "Wallet shops," each about fifty feet long and proportional width, have been erected, and put in operation. . . . The lumber wood trade that has sprung up since the opening of the railroad is immense. . . . [The] number of men and mills in motion is a good ways beyond our computation. Several families have swelled our population, and the prospect of a still greater increase is apparent, though there is still room for several mechanics, a lawyer, and a "good faithful minister". . . . But not alone

in building and business have we shown a spirit of progress. The village library has been resuscitated from its long dusty slumber, purged of its polluting pages, received additions of inviting volumes, and instead of being a mouldering monument of our neglect of reading, will, we trust, become a living and refreshing fountain of knowledge and pleasure. Another "Adult Library" has been founded by the Methodist Society, and the funds are already raised to procure the "School District Library" of the state. The "Outline Maps" decorate the inner walls of one of our school houses, and a good coat of paint has been spread on the outer wall of the other; while the truly liberal spirit of our committee has secured the services of a teacher of the first grade. . . . We note these intellectual things with more pleasure than the addition of dollars and cents, and wish we could add that the unsightly hay scale had been scaled from our common, and "Burnam wood" established in its place. . . ."[117]

"Shears" also described in quite vivid prose the coming of the railroad to South Deerfield in accounts dealing with both the construction of the line during 1846 and with the economic and social effects he felt this new mode of transportation would have on the life of his village.[118]

On occasion, "Shears" would present a weekly summary of the varied activities of organizations and clubs, such as the Lyceum or the Sunday church service.[119] But, more typically, his letters dealt at some length with specific subjects. Sometimes, agricultural, [120] industrial or commercial[121] matters were described. Other entries were on religious events[122] or holiday doings.[123] Even comments on efforts to preserve local historical buildings and sites were presented,[124] as were references to the obvious rivalry between "Old" Deerfield (the original village in the township) and "South" Deerfield.[125]

In sum, "Shears" presented scenes from the life of his town as one who optimistically believed his village would burgeon into the "city" he sometimes called it. The great value of the "Shears" column lies in the sharpness of his observations, in the considerable amount of detail dealing with people and activities and the physical aspects of the community, but above all, in his sense of what stood out and was important from the vantage point of the long-term inhabitants of the village. Unfortunately, what "Shears" tried to do was the exception, not the rule. Even he gave up in a few years, and, after the death of his wife, on occasion sent descriptions of life in other places as he travelled around the area. There were few letter-writing friends of editors of the country press with the interest, time and pa-

tience to write out in detail, week after week, what seemed memorable in the daily flow of activity in their communities.

Among the more persistent was "Pocumtuck," whose pieces on Deerfield appeared under the local news heading of the Greenfield *Gazette & Courier* off and on for at least 15 years following the Civil War. "Pocumtuck's" contribution became a kind of model for other would-be pseudonymous contributors, and others sometimes compared their feeble efforts to his far more energetic ones. "Pocumtuck" was James C. Pratt, who had apprenticed with a printer in Greenfield as a young man and later edited a political journal in nearby Chicopee. Pratt settled back into Deerfield as its storekeeper by the 1860s and was thus in an excellent position to indulge his talents as a journalistic writer. His son, in his *Boyhood Memories of Old Deerfield*, adds:

> Aunt Martha met the people of Old Deerfield in the Post Office [as Postmistress]. To young and old she spread her gracious, kindly service. My father met Deerfield's inhabitants in the store. They not only came to buy but stopped to talk; to discuss public affairs; to listen to my father as he read the great speeches of the day, or selections from Webster and other early orators. He was not only running a country store, he was also conducting a seminar for the study of history and government and related subjects . . . [His] pen name "Pocumtuck" was known and respected up and down the valley. . . . [126]

But "Pocumtuck" did not have the sense of loyalty and duty "Shears" had. He wrote with notable irregularity, gladly sharing reporting duties with other, more prosaic correspondents like "Com" and "Seymour." What made his submissions stand out was their philosophical, reflective tone. As "Pocumtuck" viewed life in his village from the gathering point of Deerfield's Pocumtuck Hotel, his personal, opinionated commentary became, over the years, a sensitive portrait of highly selective aspects of the life of his fellow townsmen, not the on-going chronicle of a "Shears." When criticized by another correspondent-subscriber for not writing as regularly as was needed to cover newsworthy events, "Pocumtuck" shot back:

> . . . [For] a few weeks past Deerfield has lacked a reporter. Bancroft should be apprised . . . [so] that he may mark [the fact] upon the pages of our history as a people. . . . Public spirit, engrossment in Wapping school house caucuses, farmer's clubs, Dea David's dinners and Deerfield lyceums are very pretty things to talk about. We have done our full share in all these matters and now claim the right to be a little selfish. . . . Hereafter Pocumtuck will write when the "spirit moves." It

is very pleasant to do that. But to be a pack horse for every village whim, no longer will."[127]

His reason for writing was simply stated: "During the past few years, I have written a great many communications for the *Gazette and Courier,* for the reason that it was pleasant to do something outside of daily routine."[128]

But often, he found little *worth* mentioning: "Nothing of special importance has happened here for some time. We need new life and a greater variety of activity. . . . "[129] Or: "Our quiet town keeps on in the even tenor of its way."[130] And, even when he did find "facts" worth noting—"*Facts* are accumulating in every nook and cranny of the village. For the last few days we have been completely deluged with *facts* . . . ,"[131]—he was forcefully reminded that his kind of personal observations would always, by their nature, be controversial: "Occasionally I think I will, just for variety, give you an old-fashioned communication; and then the question arises, " 'Cui bono?' " It is almost impossible to write without treading upon the toes of somebody's prejudice."[132]

"Pocumtuck" gave unquestioning support to the institutions he believed had brought Deerfield a large measure of stability, indeed the very tranquility that made it difficult for an aspiring correspondent to find something worth writing about. If the sermons Pratt listened to differed in character, he wouldn't elaborate for the *Gazette and Courier's* subscribers: "In the first place, 'it is none of your business.' In the second, your paper is not intended for the discussion of theological questions. . . . "[133] When the railroad company agreed to help finance the construction of a pedestrian walkway and road from its station to a near-by stone-arch underpass to prevent further accidents, he argued that "the railroad company is really under no obligation to assist in this matter, and their generosity in this case should be, and we presume is, appreciated. It is pleasant to have evidence that corporations have souls, when so much has been said to the contrary."[134] And, when serious public controversy threatened to erupt, Pratt sprang to the defense of Deerfield's beleagured selectmen, who had come under attack for the inept way they had handled the town's finances:

In our innocence, we had supposed the Deerfield Select men were honest, faithful, intelligent servants of the town. We knew when they did not possess infallibility, and never heard that they claimed it. If our recollection serves us right, the writer

was the first to suggest him of the board who resides in West Deerfield. Therefore, there should be no chance of a quarrel between him and us. He has been a bold, fearless outspoken officer. The other members of the board . . . have been equally faithful and honest. . . . There are always people ready to make the Selectmen the scapegoats of every blunder in town matters. The voters get together in town meetings, and vote away money with a perfect looseness. We say, and defy contradiction, that for several years past our voters have been extravagent in their appropriations. Our taxes are becoming almost ruinous. When pay day comes, the payers feel cross and wish to vent their ill feeling on something or somebody—not much matter what or when. At such times the poor Selectmen must expect to receive their full quota of popular indignation. If our voters would act less like school-boys in appropriating money, there would be better feeling all around.[135]

Above all, Pratt extrolled the virtues of Deerfield's past. He wrote a number of obituaries on some of the better known residents of the village, adding in one that "[in] times gone by, there were many who had *steel* in their composition. Perhaps, they often expressed themselves too strongly; perhaps they hated too intensely, and sometimes loved unwisely; but strong men they were nonetheless. . . . "[136] When someone desecrated gravesites in the village burying ground, Pratt was furious: "If there is any spot on earth around which the fondest and dearest associations cluster, it is the village cemetary. Generally speaking, man forgets his levity, his selfish purposes, his low desires, while looking at the mounds hallowed, it may be, by a mother's grief, a father's love, or the benediction of an entire community."[137]

"Pocumtuck" approved of the unusual interest in "Old Deerfield's" past on the part of a number of the descendants of the village's earliest settlers and supported neighbor George Sheldon's efforts to provide an historical chronicle, portions of which appeared in the *Gazette and Courier* during the same years Pratt's own pieces were printed.[138] Pratt thought that "[now] that 'S.' has his hand fairly in, it is hoped by many that he will write a history of the town. He is a natural lover of antiquity, and has the necessary patience to go through successfully with such a work."[139] But, Pratt and Sheldon were not friendly towards one another, and "Pocumtuck" hesitated to include anything of an historical character in his own submissions:

If we of the "old street" do not profoundly admire each other, we still have considerable regard for the elms, maples, and antique dwelling houses. Some of the latter were built in colonial, others in revolutionary times. They are staunch, brave

representatives of a past civilization. Neighbor Sheldon, our dead-bone disquisitor, who . . . has been so completely buried in antiquity that he *now* knows nothing else, can give you a history of every one of them. Perhaps he will consider me as trenching upon his perogative. Very well! Pistols and coffee for two, if he chooses.[140]

When Sheldon sought contributions for the construction of a monument in the old burying ground to commemorate Deerfield's earliest settlers, Pratt thought Sheldon's passion for antiquities had gone too far: "We can see no reason for the erection of a monument over bones which have been pulverized more than a hundred and fifty years. . . ."[141]

Sheldon's *History of Deerfield* (2 vols., 1895-96) appeared in the *Gazette and Courier* as notes and then in serialized form long before it was published in book form. As indicated earlier, local history and local news both became broad-ranging chronicles of community life. That reporter "Pocumtuck" would occasionally write about Deerfield's past, that historian Sheldon would not hesitate to submit to the editor of the area's weekly newspaper his latest historical notes and research reports is a good illustration of the lack of separation such writers perceived between history and news.

Neither Sheldon nor Pratt was typical. Not many antiquarians were active leaders of local historical societies for half a century. And, not many unpaid, voluntary reporters were former editors with a strong desire to present personalized, opinionated, witty, philosophical news-letters on village life. But because of their rigor and longevity, Sheldon and Pratt, taken together, are a good example of the relationship between the local historian and the local reporter in rural America in the years after the Civil War.

* * *

THAT LOCAL news reporting became a regular feature of the American rural journals in the middle decades of the nineteenth century is an indisputable fact. Why this was so is not clear. Some editors along the eastern seaboard undoubtedly reacted to the keenly-felt competition provided by the urban dailies'

weekly or tri-weekly "country editions," which featured local news summaries. Other eastern editors probably responded to the desire of an increasingly geographically mobile population for "news of home." Once started, the inclusion of regular forms of local news in rural papers could be easily and widely copied because the "exchange" system allowed editors all over the country to note new features as soon as they appeared. But paper-by-paper emulation turned out to be a slow process, one that took decades. There is no obvious correlation between a community's size, location, composition, political or economic significance and the timing of a given journal's initiation of local news coverage.

In any case, once the reporting of local news became an integral part of the American rural press, a basic shift occurred in the kind of information these daily or weekly journals provided their readers. No longer would "news" refer to a report on something that happened in places far removed from where one lived, from one's state, nation or the world beyond. Newspapers in America—rural and ruban—became, in effect, "community journals," that is, papers whose contents bore a significant relationship to the communities where they were printed.

But, though the city dailies provided area news for a population that was far too large for face-to-face, community-wide oral communication, by contrast, rural journals developed regular channels for written news reports on communities still small enough for the traditional mode of communication to operate effectively, which suggests that country editors ordinarily responded to forces other than those generated by a burgeoning population and readership.

In such circumstances, editors of rural papers had to entice volunteer, generally unpaid, reporters or correspondents from among their subscribers, usually with no more than the promise of a free subscription and an already-formed audience for their submissions. The fact that virtually everyone maintained the prevailing custom of providing pseudonymous signatures for such writing means that most of these pioneering local news reporters have remained anonymous and without an historic identity outside of their columns. When the veil is lifted as on James D. Pratt in his guise as "Pocumtuck"—the kind of individual revealed is one who *wants* to write, who gets a certain satisfaction out of observing the life of his village, who is, indeed, a "booster" with a promoter's concern for the repu-

tation of his community, someone who has the time, perspective, leisure – from store or office – to keep watch over the affairs of fellow townspeople, who is in a position to moralize and occasionally to chastise those around him, but who has no desire to question the basic structure and pattern of life in a community that he identifies with and loves.

"News" for such reporters was village life examined for what could easily be described, for what was unusual or dramatic, for what made a good story or anecdote or gossip, but also extended to accounts of the continuing activities of villagers, though these were only the most obvious and visible "events" over the course of a year.

In a broader context, the early reporters in country journals shared a conception of what was newsworthy with their more professional counterparts in the city press, and, indeed, with the population at large. Those who chose to write contemporaneous, factual accounts of American life were markedly restricted in their capacity to understand the basic patterns of that life and why and how it came to be the way it was. Just as individuals who wrote personal diaries in the nineteenth century often strike the modern reader as having been bereft of psychological insight, so too do writers of these "community journals" come across as largely ignorant of long-term trends, of the processes that were transforming and "nationalizing" the life patterns of the village society they observed. One looks in vain for anything approaching an analytical or conceptual frame of mind.

That we learn so little about the underlying patterns of nineteenth century community life from the writings of the most widely read observers of that life is important to an understanding of the way Americans perceived their society during the last century. Changing philosophical and scientific modes of thinking have since altered the way educated Americans have come to understand social experience in the mass society of our own time. Now, "social scientific" studies, even "news analyses," coexist with forms of descriptive journalistic writing developed during the nineteenth century.

A Research Note

While doing reasearch for a projected full-length history of his hometown, Deerfield, Massachusetts, the author was surprised to find very little local news in Greenfield *Gazette and Courier* until the 1850s, when a regular column began to appear. The few scholarly studies that deal seriously with the contents of daily or weekly journals in the United States or in Britain (during the colonial period) were consulted, but, none indicates why and how and when local news developed the way it did in American newspapers.

General studies, such as Frank Luther Mott's, have dealt in a cursory way with the development of local news reporting in the urban press. It was obvious that to make valid statements about the country press would require examining such papers from all over the country. (By the centennial year 1876 there were—according to *Rowell's Newspaper Directory*—8,129 newspapers of all kinds in the United States).

The largest collections of American newspapers are housed in the Library of Congress and the American Antiquarian Society (in Worcester, Mass.). Most of this essay is based on evidence garnered from these two collections and from other newspapers selected because they were available on microfilm in long "runs." The method was to look through the available issues of many different papers to gain an informed "impression" of whatever patterns could be discerned. The alternative approach, that of a statistical analysis, was rejected. It would not answer the "why" questions, why local news reporting burgeoned when it did, why certain subscribers became voluntary reporters, what their perception of news was, and what we learn about village and rural life from their reports—all questions that can be dealt with only by a careful sifting of many issues of many papers.

The paper already under study for the Deerfield project included "Shears" and "Pocumtuck," the correspondents from Deerfield covered here at some length. How typical were they? They were not at all atypical in the sense that the general types of "news" they reported can be found in any number of other papers. What was unusual was their rigor, persistence and identity (we know something about them). Most of the voluntary reporters were—and remain—wholly anonymous. Therefore, the sections on "Shears" and Pocumtuck" offer rare glimpses of a subject ordinarily hidden from the historian's view.

NOTES

1. Geoffrey Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

2. June 8, 1802; Milton W. Hamilton, *Country Printer: New York State, 1785-1830* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 211.

3. (Adrian, Mich.) May 1, 1860.

4. Jan. 24, 1866.

5. E.g., Portland (Me.) *Transcript* (1840s), Burlington (N.J.) *Gazette* (1870s), Fishkill (N.Y.) *Standard* and Lancaster (Pa.) *Examiner and Herald* (1870s) and *The Nelson Examiner* (Lovingston, Va.) (1870s). The Alexandria (Va.) *Gazette* featured an editorial piece entitled "A Family Newspaper" in its Oct. 18, 1849, issue. In its "prospectus" the West Roxbury (Mass.) *Gazette* said: "We think that a local paper should be in the truest sense of the word a family paper, and shall therefore try to arrange its columns in such a manner as to make it a favorite with every member of the family." Feb. 8, 1873.

6. Cranfield, p. 29; also, Roy Wiles, *Freshest Advices: Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965).

7. Hamilton, p. 139.

8. *Index to Local News in the Hampshire Gazette of Northampton, Massachusetts, 1786-1937* (Boston: The Historical Records Survey, Works Project Administration, 1939), p. iv.

9. Wiles, p. 252.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 252, 56-57.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

12. Cranfield, p. 91.

13. This pattern existed in a number of early American journals printed continuously from the late eighteenth to at least the early nineteenth centuries: Boston *Gazette* (after 1719), *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford) (after 1764), *Eastern Argus* (Portsmouth, N.H.) (after 1756), *Commercial Advertiser* (New York) (after 1797), *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, N.Y.) (after 1795), *American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, Pa.) (after 1791), Salem (Mass.) *Gazette* (after 1790), and Pittsfield (Mass.) *Sun* (after 1800). The American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, Mass.) has a microfilm collection of early American newspapers. That collection provides the most convenient means for making such a survey. Scholars who have examined American newspapers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries agree that foreign news clearly predominated over domestic and local news: e.g., Richard L. Merritt, *Symbols of American Community, 1735-1775* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 62, 82; Allan Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 21-2.

14. Hamilton, pp. 139-43.

15. April 4, 1827; Hamilton, p. 143.

16. Bernard Weisberger, *The American Newspaperman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 93-107; Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History, 1690-1960* (MacMillan: New York, 1962), pp. 220-23, 241-47. For an analysis of why the "penny press" developed when and as it did: Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), pp. 43-60. Schudson emphasizes the egalitarian outlook and democritization of life that characterized the so-called Jacksonian Era.

17. Weisberger, p. 96.

18. Mott, pp. 242-43.
19. Sept. 3, 1833.
20. Jan. 15, 1876.
21. Nov. 1, 1876.
22. For example: Boston *Semi-Weekly* (1768-1876) or *Weekly Advertiser* (1811-1901), Boston *Weekly Atheneum* (1846-1856), Boston *Semi-Weekly* (1832-1857) or *Weekly Atlas* (1842-1861), Boston *Courier* (1837-1871), Boston *Courier for the Country* (1824-?), Boston *Semi-Weekly* (1835-1887) or *Weekly Journal* (1833-1917), Boston *Semi-Weekly Post* (1852-1921), New York *American* (for the country—semi-weekly) (1820-1845), New York *Semi-Weekly* (1836-1879) or *Weekly Express* (1843-1881), New York *Evening Star for the Country* (semi-weekly) (1833-1843), New York *Weekly News* (1855-1886).
23. Dec. 20, 1842.
24. Jan. 18, 1848; the Pittsfield *Sun* expressed the same sentiment five years later (Jan. 6, 1853).
25. Reprinted in the *Franklin Democrat* (Greenfield, Mass.), Jan. 18, 1848.
26. Reprinted in the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier*, Dec. 20, 1842.
27. Dec. 10, 1857.
28. Jan. 2, 1860. Similar statements appeared in the *Planter's Banner* (Franklin, La.), Jan. 4, 1849; the *Bucks County Intelligencer* (Doylestown, Pa.), Dec. 7, 1858; and the Worcester (Mass.) *Palladium*, Feb. 2, 1870.
29. Evidence grows that there was a remarkably high incidence of mobility in and out of the cities, towns and countryside of nineteenth century America. See, e.g., Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964) and Peter Knights, *Plain People of Boston, A Study in City Growth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).
30. Reprinted in the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier*, Dec. 20, 1842.
31. Other papers whose column periodically appeared and disappeared include *The Jeffersonian* (Clarkesville, Tenn.) and the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier*.
32. For the impact of the war on various communities: George W. Smith and Charles Judah, eds., *Life in the North During the Civil War: A Source History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966).
33. Jan. 27, Feb. 3, Mar. 7, 31, Oct. 13, 1863.
34. May 6, 1865.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Oct. 26, 1865.
37. This collection is housed at the American Antiquarian Society.
38. George P. Rowell, *Forty Years an Advertising Agent, 1865-1905* (Printer's Ink Publishing Co.: New York, 1906), pp. 225-36.
39. *Every Saturday* (Bridgewater, Mass.).
40. This statement appears on an actual subscribers' sheet. American Antiquarian Society (Miscellaneous—Louisiana folder).
41. Feb. 8, 1873. Roxbury was then a suburb of Boston.

42. The paper survived for at least a part of the year. American Antiquarian Society (Miscellaneous – Massachusetts folder).

43. *Spirit of the Times* (Batavia, N.Y.), Oct. 7, 1876.

44. *Democratic Republican* (Hamilton, N.Y.), Sept. 26, 1876.

45. Weisberger, p. 111: *New Hampshire Patriot*, Jan. 6, 1840; *Franklin Democrat* (Greenfield, Mass.), June 17, 1845: Newburgh (N.Y.) *Telegraph*, April 24, 1845; Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier*, Nov. 11, 1845.

46. Sept. 29, 1876.

47. *New Jersey Standard*, May 23 and Nov. 29, 1855.

48. Jan. 1, 1875.

49. Mott, p. 443-4.

50. E.g., *New Hampshire Patriot*, Jan. 6, 1840; *The Metropolitan* (Jefferson, Mo.), Feb. 1, 1848; Lynchburg (Va.) *News*, Sept. 7, 1876.

51. Attleboro (Mass.) *Chronicle*, *The Democrat* (Clinton, N.J.), Lebanon (Pa.) *Advertiser*, *Page Courier* (Luray, Va.), *Virginia Southwest Enterprise* (Wytheville), *Western Expositor* (Asheville, N.C.), Wilson (N.C.) *Advance* and Cedar Rapids (Ia.) *Standard*.

52. Aug. 26, 1865.

53. Sept. 23, 1876.

54. June 10, 1876.

55. April 27, 1860; also, *Centre Reporter* (Centre Hall, Pa.), Sept. 7, 1876.

56. Feb. 8, 1842, and again on Nov. 7, 1843.

57. E.g., *The Union Free Press* (Kittening, Pa.), Jan. 13, 1876; Asbury Park (N.J.) *Journal*, Feb. 26, 1876; the Murfreesboro (N.C.) *Enquirer*, June 1, 1876; Dover (N.J.) *Index*, Sept. 21, 1876; *New Jersey Mirror* (Mt. Holly), Oct. 5, 1876; Perth Amboy (N.J.) *Gazette*, Oct. 6, 1876; *Commercial Advertiser* (Buffalo, N.Y.), Oct. 25, 1876; *Crawford Journal* (Meadville, Pa.), Sept. 23, 1876; Lawrence (Mass.) *Journal*, July 29, 1876.

58. Feb. 26, 1876. Other examples: Murfreesboro (N.C.) *Enquirer*, June 1, 1876; Dover (N.J.) *Index*, Sept. 20, 1876: *New Jersey Mirror* (Mt. Holly), Oct. 5, 1876; Perth Amboy (N.J.) *Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1876; *The Democratic Banner* (Morristown, N.J.), Oct. 19, 1876; Lawrence (Mass.) *Journal*, July 29, 1876.

59. Sept. 1853.

60. June 10, 1876. Also: *New Jersey Republican* (Hackensack and Englewood), Sept. 21, 1876.

61. April 27, 1860.

62. May 21, 1857.

63. Jan. 20, 1854.

64. March 11, 1863.

65. Aug. 26, 1865.

66. Sept. 20, 1876.

67. Jan. 13, 1876.

68. Oct. 5, 1876.

69. Sept. 20, 1876.

70. Sept. 24, 1853.
71. Aug. 21, 1874.
72. July 24, 1876.
73. Oct. 26, 1876.
74. Sept. 21, 1876.
75. June 4, 1873.
76. July 28, 1855.
77. May 30, 1850.
78. Mott, pp. 253-66. For a general discussion of the relationship between government and press: Culver H. Smith, *The Press, Politics, and Patronage: The American Government's Use of Newspapers, 1789-1875* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976). In 1860, Buchanan's decision not to use a Washington paper as an official party organ and the establishment of the Government Printing Office resulted in the separation of press and government at the national level and had the long-term effect of undermining the party-press system at all levels.
79. April 29, 1848.
80. Aug. 25, 1853.
81. March 9, 1864.
82. David van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America, 1607-1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); David J. Russo, *Families and Communities: A New View of American History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1974), pp. 14-51.
83. Mott, p. 243; Weisberger, p. 50.
84. Jan. 16, 1838.
85. Aug. 26, 1845.
86. Oct. 19, 1876.
87. May 9, 1876.
88. Sept. 20, 1876.
89. Feb. 13, 1868.
90. Oct. 19, 1876.
91. March 10, 1876.
92. Jan. 18, 1850.
93. For an in-depth study on this point: Stuart Blumin, *The Urban Threshold: Growth & Change in a Nineteenth-century American Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
94. This summary is based upon a thorough examination of the local news column of the Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier* as that column related to Deerfield, Mass. The examination extended from the 1850s to the 1890s and was conducted with the assistance of the writer's graduate seminar students. Items were categorized under a broad range of subject headings for each year during this period.
95. E.g., Liberty (Mo.) *Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1856.
96. E.g., Newport (R.I.) *Mercury*, June 18, 1853.

97. E.g., Burlington (Vt.) *Free Press*, April 3-5, 1848.

98. E.g., *Weekly Clarkesville* (Tenn.) *Chronicle*, April 24, 1857 and Hanover (Pa.) *Spectator*, Jan. 29, 1858.

99. Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier*, May 29, 1876. Another account was given on May 15, 1876.

100. *Ibid.*, June 5, 1876.

101. For a general account of "boosters:" Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 113-68.

102. For a general discussion: Page Smith, *As a City Upon a Hill: The Town in American History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 84-109.

103. *Franklin Democrat*, March 16, 1847.

104. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1847.

105. Oct. 6, 1846; Nov. 7, 1848.

106. Oct. 3, 1848; June 6, 1848.

107. May 12, 1846.

108. June 1, 1847; also, Oct. 5, 1847, and Jan. 11, 1848.

109. April 10, 1849.

110. Dec. 2, 1845.

111. Aug. 22, 1848.

112. Dec. 5, 1845.

113. Feb. 23, 1847.

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.*, Oct. 5, 1847; Jan. 11, 1848.

116. *Ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1846; June 8, July 6, 1847; Jan. 18, 1848.

117. *Ibid.*, Jan. 18, 1848.

118. E.g., *ibid.*, Aug. 11, 1846.

119. E.g., Jan. 5, 19, 1847.

120. Feb. 2, Mar. 16, 1847.

121. April 20, 1847; Jan. 18, 1848.

122. April 18, 1847; June 6, 13, Oct. 10, 1848.

123. July 14, 1846; July 13, 1847.

124. Jan. 18, Nov. 14, 1848.

125. March 3, 1846.

126. Frank Pratt, *Boyhood Memories of Old Deerfield* (Portland, Me.: Southworth-Anthoensen Press, 1936), pp. 293-4.

127. Greenfield (Mass.) *Gazette and Courier*, Oct. 19, 1858. Fellow reporters chided Pratt for not writing more regularly: "Surely were he here, and his eyes and ears open, he would not let slip so many interesting items which he might have had for your paper." *Ibid.*, March 29, 1869.

128. *Ibid.*, Sept. 9, 1869.

129. Jan. 24, 1870.

130. Sept. 14, 1868.

131. Feb. 3, 1868.

132. Feb. 28, 1870.

133. April 3, 1868.

134. Oct. 19, 1868.
135. Feb. 28, 1870.
136. Aug. 3, 1868.
137. July 3, 1871.
138. Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26, 1867; Feb. 24, April 6, 1868, for example.
139. April 3, 1868.
140. May 31, 1868.
141. Sept. 9, 1869.